

AUAA teams are contenders

College sports among best on the continent

Fans taking in last weekend's college hockey and basketball action may not have realized it at the time, but they were watching some of the best college athletics in the country.

The basketball Panthers' competition on Sunday was none other than the St. FX X-Men, the CIAU defending champions. Recalling the 1992-93 basketball season, one should realize just how the X-Men won the title last year. In an unprecedented display of competitiveness, six out of the eight teams in the AUAA were not only in the hunt for a playoff position, but also first place. Teams such as St. Mary's, St. FX, Dalhousie, Acadia, Cape Breton and UPEI were so competitive that predicting the outcome of a game was impossible.

The calibre in the nation's most competitive basketball league was outstanding. For example, a game at the Sports Centre between UPEI and the future league champions, ST. FX, featured one of the best games ever played at UPEI. The score ended up 91-90 in favour of X, with the lead in the game changing each minute. The Panthers were every bit as talented as St. FX, and could hold their own with any team in the league. But they did not even make the playoffs, which showed how good the league was. In fact, St. FX didn't even make first place, but still won the league championship and went to Halifax for the CIAU's where they won handily, proving that the Panthers and most of the AUAA's basketball teams were as good as anyone in the country. It is no wonder that the league is considering expanding the playoffs, to give more of these top-quality teams a chance to show what they can do.

For the record, officials in Toronto have finally, and perhaps reluctantly, realized that the teams to beat in the CIAU reside right here in Atlantic Canada. This past week they have ranked several teams in the top ten, including the Dalhousie Tigers, whom the Panthers beat on Friday night, thus assuring UPEI a move upward in the national rankings.

In hockey, while the Panthers may be in a rebuilding year, they still play in the best league in Canada and, to many hockey fans' surprise...North America. The AUAA, the hockey version, has been home to the most competitive league in Canada for a number of years; however, since the Moncton Blue Eagles' domination of the CIAU in the early eighties, most of the victors have come from western Canada. More recently, though, the dominant team was the University of Trois Rivieres Patroites. The Quebec team was un-

beatable in the early nineties, averaging over six goals per game and allowing less than three. Needless to say, this squad was ranked number one in Canada for most the 1990-91 season, and when the Final Four championship came to Toronto, the Patriotes were the heavy favourites. Their opposition came from a team from the west, an Ontario squad, and the Atlantic champions, who just happened to be the UPEI Panthers.

The Panthers were rated as major underdogs- given virtually no chance to win. UQTR had only lost two or three games that year and the Panthers' record was not nearly as impressive. But what the "experts" failed to consider was the quality of the AUAA.

That game was on TSN that year, and the announcers had virtually awarded the game to the french team. But as the game wore on it became obvious, painfully obvious to the TSN sportscasters who said it would take a miracle for UPEI to win, that the Panthers were every bit as good as Trois Rivieres. This Quebec team came very close to being beaten by the Panthers. The final score was 4-3. The final shots on goal were 31-30. The AUAA was starting to prove itself to the rest of the country.

Last year's AUAA representative was the Acadia Axemen. This team was incredible, winning all but four games. Acadia pounded the opposition in last year's CIAU competition in Toronto. The other teams were no match as the CIAU crown finally came to Atlantic Canada.

College hockey observers have long been wondering how Canadian teams would stack up against the powerful NCAA division of Ameri-

can college hockey. Despite Canada's tradition in hockey, far more American college players have been selected in the NHL draft than in Canada. The question remained: What would happen if the best in Canadian college hockey, the Acadia Axemen who waltzed their way to a championship a year before, met the perennial powerhouse of American College hockey, the University of Maine Black Bears? The Bears, last year's American college champions are also the NCAA favourites this season. In the early stages of this year, the Black Bears have been living up to the predictions, scoring over six goals per game and averaging less than two goals against. The showdown occurred earlier in the fall, in Maine. The game, which was played before over three thousand spectators, ended in a 4-4 draw. The consensus was that this game was one of the best, most exciting games the Maine Back Bears have ever been involved in. Comments among the Maine supporters indicated their surprise at the strength of the Acadia club. The University of Maine coach went on record saying that he wished Acadia was in their league, so this calibre of hockey could be played more often. Acadia fans went on record saying they wished they could get a crack at Maine on their own home turf in Nova Scotia, where they went undefeated all of last year. Nevertheless, the question was answered. Canadian college hockey compares very well with its American counterparts, making it obvious that the AUAA is as good as any college hockey league in North America.

TODD PETRIE



Peter Clarey: Gold medal tournament winner

Epee Gold for Clarey

UPEI fencer wins tournament

The UPEI Fencing Club is proud to report that Peter Clarey, Sophomore Arts student, out-duelled fencers from N.S. and N.B. to capture the gold medal in epee during the Tri-Sword Fencing Tournament held in Halifax last week. While it became evident during the course of the competition that he would be assured of the silver, nobody believed that he would be able to overcome Dr. Yuri from Russia. But he did- congratulations!